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# US-Soviet tension illustrates handling of secret reports

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Washington, D.C. — Heightened tension between the United States and the Soviet Union is providing new examples of how policymakers use, abuse, confuse and sometimes ignore foreign intelligence collected at the cost of billions of dollars.

And members of Congress are taking another look at the methods used by Republican presidential candidate George Bush when he was director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Bush had a style far different than that of current CIA Director Stansfield Turner.

Congressional investigations of intelligence, including one conducted by Rep. Clement J. Zablocki (D-Wis.) and another by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.), generally give high marks to the information collected by the CIA but question the use of that information.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter's call for increased defense spending and the delay of SALT II have caused some members of Congress to question whether this country was caught by surprise. They ask:

• Was Carter caught by surprise in Afghanistan? He should not have been, according to Aspin, because the CIA had excellent information about troop movements near the border and because there were briefings for the press that included predictions of the invasion.

• Why do congressmen with secret information insist that Carter and Defense Secretary Harold Brown have underestimated the Soviet military threat? The congressional information is "worst case" material, collected by the military, which is balanced in official national intelligence with information from other sources.

• Is there a new National Intelligence Estimate that warns that, without SALT II, the Soviets will have two or three times as many nuclear warheads as the US? No. The estimate is more than two years old and represents the consensus of military intelligence and CIA.

"There's a difference in philosophy between the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) and the CIA," Aspin explained in an interview. "The DIA wants to know what is the most that the Soviets can do that is consistent with our information. They come up with a high number. That's whittled down. The CIA is supposed to have a 90% confidence factor, so occasionally the DIA is right."

Members of the House Armed Services Committee use DIA information to charge Carter and Brown with hiding the real Soviet threat. Brown uses CIA information to deny the information.

Both Aspin and Zablocki are members of the House Intelligence Committee. Zablocki is also chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which will question administration officials in closed session about the value of CIA information in foreign policy.

Zablocki's committee investigators say that if this country was surprised by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it was a policy failure, not an intelligence failure. Frequently, they say, residents ignore evidence they don't like.

"If an ambassador tells him one thing and all the administration policy is in the opposite direction, he doesn't want to look at it. The classic example was Vietnam; President Johnson was told, but he didn't want to look at it," a Zablocki investigator said.

Aspin is critical of Turner for trying to boil disagreements out of his National Intelligence Estimates. Bush, he said, erred in the opposite extreme by promoting dissent.

"Turner locks everybody in the room until they come up with a consensus, which might not be anybody's estimate," Aspin said. "With Bush, the footnotes were footnoted. Every agency did its own thing and the policymaker didn't know what the official estimate was."

The most widely publicized exercise in dissent promoted by Bush was the use of a team of outsiders, called Team B, to predict Soviet military intentions. Team B concluded that the Soviets were seeking superiority while the official CIA Team A reached the opposite conclusion.

In Aspin's view, the weaknesses of intelligence include a "mindset" that fails to note the unexpected, the collection of too much information to be analyzed, the refusal of policymakers to hear bad news and the reluctance of those who collect information to dispute their superiors.

"And we expect the CIA to do abroad what we can't do at home, predicting political events that are inherently unpredictable," Aspin said. "How many people predicted that Jimmy Carter would be elected president in 1976?"

There is a tendency, Aspin said, to think that the Soviets are fixed in their habits.

"That doesn't always run true," he said. "We thought the Soviets would never use troops outside the Warsaw Pact (Eastern Europe). But there they are, in Afghanistan."